

Special Needs Transportation Coordination Study

ACCT Presentation
October 10, 2008

Presentation: Overview

- I. Coordination in Washington State
- II. Study Key Findings and Preliminary Recommendations
- III. Next Steps



Coordination in Washington State

Coordination: Activities in Washington

- Recent federal legislation (SAFETEA-LU) engaged human service & transportation partners at local level
- Many active local coordination councils
- Versatile brokerage infrastructure
- Coordination with tribes
- Innovation through pilot projects
- Trend toward more regional, corridor based services

Coordination: Untapped Opportunities

- **Lack of statewide policies** to define and enforce coordination
- **Largest sponsors do not blend funds** and operate separately



Results in:

- confusion for customer
- potential for duplication and redundancy

Coordination Barriers: Findings

- **Funding restrictions** prevent or hinder blending agencies' funds
- Developing equitable **cost-sharing** methodology is cumbersome
- **Incompatible vehicle requirements** (especially with school buses)
- **Client databases** cannot be shared

Coordination Barriers: Findings (Cont.)

- Different **driver requirements**
- Inconsistent planning and **reporting requirements** for transportation and human service agencies
- **Unique customer needs** don't always allow for grouping passengers
- **Contract or labor union restrictions** sometimes limit flexibility

Coordination Barriers: Customer's Perspective

- Confusing and inconsistent eligibility standards for various programs
- (Often) no clearinghouse to find out about options
- Travel across county lines is difficult and time consuming, especially if a transfer is involved
- Social service caseworkers don't always know full range of mobility options

Role of ACCT

- Not a clear understanding by stakeholders of its mission
- Not empowered with meaningful oversight of coordination at the statewide level
- Not provided with adequate staffing or budget to fulfill its potential
- DOT required to chair and staff ACCT—prevents opportunity to cultivate leadership role from others

Role of ACCT

- ACCT initiated local coordination councils; currently there is lack of formal relationship with local councils
- Most think ACCT should continue, at minimum as a forum to encourage discussion and information sharing
- Members want to be more pro-active, but need the tools and authority to do so



Study Key Findings and Preliminary Recommendations

Principles for Developing Recommendations

- View coordination as a strategy, not as the ultimate goal
- Effective coordination policies and procedures need to be established at both the state and local levels
- Seek to advance coordination where there is opportunity for the greatest “bang for the buck”
- Build on strengths
- Test new concepts
- Recognize tradeoffs between efficiency and quality
- Crisis can foster creativity

Findings & Preliminary Recommendations: Overview

- Governance and Policy
- Uniformity of Definitions
- Funding
- Improving Connectivity
- Influencing Facility Siting Practices
- Coordination with Pupil Transportation
- Influencing Federal Planning and Program Requirements

Governance and Policy:

Key Findings

- Effective coordination occurs within a bi-level structure: state and local levels
- ACCT's mission is not well understood and it lacks tools needed to be more effective
- No state mandate for agencies to coordinate
- No central clearinghouse to document state's expenditures for special needs transportation
- Opportunity exists to better coordinate Medicaid and public transit programs
- Medicaid brokerage arrangement works well and has proven to support broader coordination efforts

Governance and Policy: Preliminary Recommendations

- Establish Bi-Level Coordination Oversight
- Amend ACCT bylaws to strengthen its role as the statewide Coordinating Council
- Allow more autonomy for ACCT
- Establish Local Coordinating Boards to oversee Community Transportation Coordinators (brokers)
- Require all state agencies, not only Medicaid, to purchase transportation through regional broker

Governance and Policy:

Preliminary Recommendations (cont)

- The Local Coordination Board would:
 - Provide oversight of Community Transportation Coordinator
 - Serve as local resource to identify and advance coordination activities
 - Conduct coordinated planning, in collaboration with local RTPO

Governance and Policy:

Preliminary Recommendations (cont)

- Community Transportation Coordinator would:
 - Operate one-call center to provide information on mobility options
 - Contract with variety of local service providers
 - Provide services under contract for participating agencies, according to agency specifications
 - Assign client trips to the most appropriate provider
 - Manage a volunteer program
 - Maintain program records and report on progress

Governance and Policy:

Preliminary Recommendations

- Pursue opportunities to better coordinate Medicaid and public paratransit services
 - Contract with transit operators to serve as Medicaid providers to be reimbursed consistent with Medicaid policies
 - Share client information, within the guidance of HIPPA, to identify passengers with dual eligibility.
 - Establish and implement uniform cost allocation formulas when grouping trips with different funding sources.

Governance and Policy: Under Consideration

- How should we define regions?
 - RTPO regions
 - existing Medicaid regions
 - counties
- Who should contract with the local community transportation coordinator?
 - State council (ACCT)
 - local designated agency, such as county or RTPO
 - DSHS

Uniformity of Definitions:

Key Finding

- Inconsistent definitions and methods for budgeting, reporting and evaluating special needs transportation is a barrier to coordination

Uniformity of Definitions: Preliminary Recommendations

- Direct ACCT to establish common definitions for reporting service characteristics for special needs transportation that are used by all ACCT members and local programs
- Establish uniformity in performance and cost reporting requirements
- Establish uniformity by mode and passenger type for vehicle and driver standards
- Establish a clearinghouse and common procedures to facilitate driver background checks

Funding: Key Findings

- ACCT is underfunded and cannot carry out its potential mission without adequate funding
- Seed money—as well as ongoing financial support—needed for local coordination councils
- WSDOT controls state and federal funds which could be tied to coordination requirements

Funding: Preliminary Recommendations

- Require state agencies that purchase transportation to participate in and financially support ACCT
- Establish a dedicated funding source that could be used for “gap funding” and local mobility managers
- Prioritize use of federal SAFETEA-LU funds for mobility management purposes to help support local coordination councils
- Direct WSDOT to tie use of funds it oversees to meeting coordination objectives

Connectivity: Key Findings

- Many people need to travel beyond their immediate community to access specialized services
- Often, interjurisdictional travel is difficult, time consuming and inconvenient
- Transit systems do not always coordinate schedules, fares, or have convenient transfer sites

Connectivity: Preliminary Recommendations

- Identify transit “hubs” and direct Local Coordinating Board to develop connectivity plans
- Identify and adopt common connectivity standards
- Develop, test and implement technology that can promote connectivity
- Seek to eliminate artificial barriers that force transfers
- Set up corridor service where demand justifies it

Facility Siting: Key Findings

- Considering proximity to public transportation when making decisions on facility siting is often an after thought.
- Public transit providers are often asked after the fact to provide service to new facilities

Facility Siting: Key Findings

There is some opportunity to influence decisions made by human service providers with respect to locating facilities near transit.

- **Public sector facilities:** Some opportunity, but the state & DSHS have policies and procedures to ensure that facilities are well sited.
- **Private state licensed/funded facilities:** Currently, licensing and funding does not consider facility siting. Facilities could be better sited and there is potential to affect siting decisions.
- **Other private businesses/organizations:** Retirement communities are probably the most poorly sited with respect to transit. However, they are the least regulated and hardest facility type to influence.

Facility Siting: Preliminary Recommendations

- Development review for access to transit for all private sector human service facilities
- Review preferred location by transit provider before purchase/lease is finalized
- More specific language defining “access to transit” in siting guidelines for state facilities

Facility Siting: Preliminary Recommendations

- Take accessibility into account as an operating cost when comparing potential sites
- Locate sites near a “cluster” of clients to ensure more efficient provision of paratransit services
- State and local incentives for private sector facilities to locate near transit

Coordination with Pupil Transportation: Key Findings

- There are limited opportunities to integrate pupil and public transportation systems
- Providing transportation for homeless students is challenging, and a significant cost for school districts
- Provisions already exist that allow for coordination with school funded resources (buses), but are rarely implemented

Coordination with Pupil Transportation: Preliminary Recommendations

- Direct districts to investigate feasibility of providing transportation for homeless youth through community broker
- Direct districts to collect cost and trip information for providing homeless transportation
- Direct OSPI to develop program guidelines for use of school resources (vehicles) for broader community purposes

Influencing Federal Planning and Program Requirements: Key Findings

- Many special needs transportation programs are defined by federal laws and regulations, such as Medicaid, Americans with Disabilities, Older Americans Act, McKinney-Vento Act, etc.

Influencing Federal Planning and Program Requirements: Preliminary Recommendations

- Establish comparable planning requirements for human service agencies as those directed for use of transit funding through SAFETEA-LU
- Collaborate with the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth or other associations to develop common goals and objectives for reauthorization of the McKinney Vento Act
- Support federal legislation that would increase the reimbursement rate authorized for volunteers
- Expand funding programs to be subject to Coordinated Plans to include Section 5311 and 5311(c) (tribal transportation program)

Next Steps

- Review findings and preliminary recommendations with key stakeholders, including representative Medicaid brokers, DSHS staff, transit operator representatives, OSPI, etc.
- Refine recommendations as needed
- Draft Plan issued for public review: November
- Draft Plan submitted to JTC in early December